

cultus of Saints ; he put it on the same footing as the foolish adoration of relics, the costly decoration of shrines, and the other ways in which pilgrims wasted their time and money. Wycliffe was not the first or only man of his time in England to be shocked by these practices. Langland, whose \* Piers Plowman\* was generally read among all classes ten or twenty years before the rise of Lollardry, had in that great work spoken even more severely of the popular religion, and used the word \* idolatry' more freely than Wycliffe. Chaucer's gorge rose at the Pardoner and his relics of ' pigge's bones.\* The impulse that Wycliffe gave was therefore welcome to many, and was eagerly followed by the Lollards, who soon became more distinctly iconoclastic than their founder, and regarded Saints, Saints' days and Saint-worship with a horror which he never expressed. But his other doctrines of the relations of man to God and of man to the Church, his new ideas of pardon and absolution, were the only effective engine for the destruction of those abuses and vulgarities, which Langland and Chaucer vainly deprecated.

Against the persons and classes who lived by encouraging superstition, Wycliffe waged implacable war. He recognised that as long as the orders of friars existed in England, it would always be hard to fight against the practices and beliefs which they taught. His views on monks and on Bishops respectively were much the same. His objections to them all were founded on the belief that they were the real props of all he sought to destroy, the sworn enemies of all he sought to introduce. After his quarrel with the friars, he put these thoughts into a definite formula. All men, he declared, belonged, or ought to belong, to the < sect of Christ/ and -to that alone. The distinguishing mark of the members was the practice of Christian virtues in ordinary life, whether by priest or laymen. The body had therefore its rule, the Christian code of morality. He found, he said, no warrant in Scripture to justify any man in binding himself by another code of religious rules, or becoming a member of any new sect. Yet that, he said, was what the monks and • friars had done. They claimed to be \* the religious/ more dear to God than other men. But their rule was of earthly making,